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Leadership in the National Wildlife Refuge System

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service White Paper  
for the  
Conservation in Action Summit



**Conservation in Action Summit**

*A new century of conservation challenges*

**Leadership Team Members**

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## Executive Summary

The National Wildlife Refuge System requires effective leadership to remain a vital organization and to succeed both on Refuge System lands and, more broadly, on the national issue of resource conservation. That can be achieved only by developing a well-prepared, diverse conservation workforce prepared to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Refuge System, after defining how effective leadership can be measured, should implement a program based on four goals:

1. Make leadership development a Refuge System priority
2. Create and institutionalize a leadership culture
3. Encourage diversity of thought
4. Become a learning organization

Although the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Refuge System have made significant progress in leadership development over the past 10 years, much remains to be done. Proof lies in the fact that only one member of the Directorate has ever worked on a national wildlife refuge, and representation from other, smaller Service programs continues to exceed the Refuge System's participation in leadership development programs. These facts are undoubtedly linked.

Most experts agree future success lies in partnerships. Shrinking agency budgets and workforce, a reduction in traditional constituencies, and expanding threats all belie the ability of a single agency or entity to be successful alone. At the same time, successful partnerships require effective leadership by people who recognize what needs to be done, with whom, and how.

## Introduction

Many definitions of leadership share commonalities and some are remarkably similar, but no two original definitions are identical. The art of leadership is very personal with, for some, a strong basis in faith and trust. People, however, respond to leadership when they see it in action.

The role and future of leadership within the Refuge System should be considered as it operates with and influences a larger environment: the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of the Interior, local communities, Refuge System partners, and stakeholders. Leadership will play a central role in meeting refuge purposes, the Refuge System's mission and, ultimately, the Refuge System's role in national wildlife conservation.

This document specific shows how leadership is required to address Refuge System needs in science, wildlife and habitat, wildlife dependent recreation and strategic growth, especially in the context of partnerships.

In contrast to *Fulfilling the Promise*, this paper discusses the issue of leadership with an understanding of the involvement of Refuge System partners and stakeholders, in

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*People call managers leaders, without considering whether they really are leaders....*

accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 and recent learning. The Conservation in Action Summit will consider how leadership approaches can be enhanced to ensure that the Refuge System fully contributes to the conservation of the nation's wildlife.

While leadership is difficult to define, the concept of management is easier. In the early days of public administration, theorist Leonard White described the science of management with a simple acronym: POSDCoRB - Planning, Organization, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting. Although practitioners have discarded the naive view of management as a pure science, professionals continue to grapple with what leadership, and people continue to confuse "management" and "leadership."

People call managers leaders, without considering whether they really are leaders when evaluated by any one of myriad criteria. While managers may have a responsibility or duty to lead, do they provide the vision requisite for leadership? Do they have willing followers, or simply subordinates? Do they truly *lead*, or do they merely *direct*? Are they agents of change, or just bystanders and victims of it? Leaders are not defined by titles, but by actions. *Fulfilling the Promise* states, "Every employee ... has an essential leadership role."

Employees join the Refuge System and the Fish and Wildlife Service because they feel strongly about the mission and work. They leave because of poor managers. Effective leadership is the primary driver of employee satisfaction (and therefore engagement and productivity) in the federal government. How can these competencies – collections of knowledge, skills, and abilities – be identified in tomorrow's leaders?

#### **Improvement Act Direction**

**T**he Improvement Act discusses many directives concerning management of natural resources and wildlife dependent recreation and clear direction to work more collaboratively with stakeholders, neighboring landowners and, most especially, the state fish and wildlife conservation agencies. But it contains no "leadership."

#### ***Fulfilling the Promise Vision***

**T**here are numerous references to leaders and leadership within *Fulfilling the Promise*. Of *Promises'* 42 recommendations, 12 directly relate to leadership or leadership and management functions (L1- L12), and another four address workforce and career development issues (WH11, WH12, WH13, and P3). It also contains the Refuge System's guiding principles.

*Promises* recalls the Refuge System's leaders of the past and recognizes, "Every employee, in every discipline, has an essential leadership role," regardless of grade or job title. Importantly, *Promises* makes explicit what the Improvement Act did not: "Nothing is more essential to mission accomplishment than the [leadership function of] motivation and morale of people." It continues, "...leadership is the unequivocal prerequisite for mission accomplishment. Robust budgets, political support, public trust,

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and supportive legislation are necessary, but without visionary leadership they will not result in accomplishing the mission.”

*Promises* explains the role of Leadership in many areas of responsibility, primarily through leading by example and partnerships. The Executive Summary reads, in part:

*Leadership is not simply doing things right, but doing the right things. Without leadership, the System visions for wildlife, habitat, and people cannot be achieved. With effective leadership, they cannot be denied. Every employee has a leadership role and every refuge and wetland management district, and indeed, every Service office, deserves the energy of effective leadership.*

*The System and the Service have a proud heritage of leadership. Extending this legacy of leadership into the future will require that leadership development be made a higher priority.*

**Leadership in  
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to success.**

*Leaders must ensure organizational vitality by seeing that new and diverse talent is brought into the System, that employee pride remains high, and that the System is administered as a true system of lands by paying attention to the consistency of organizational structure and management policies.*

*Meeting the needs and carrying out the recommendations for improving leadership for the System and the Service will, in the end, pay huge dividends for fish, wildlife, and plant resources. And doing right by the resource is what doing the right thing is all about.*

*Promises* emphasizes the importance of leading by example, also called modeling. For instance, “...the System should provide a model of how to apply good science in wildlife conservation.” In a discussion about the wildlife and habitat vision, it continues, “The vision also recognizes a commitment to *leadership and excellence* in wildlife management, and a responsibility to share this leadership by being *models* for others to learn from and follow.”

National wildlife refuges are called “showcases” in *Promises*’ People section, where “...the idea took hold that a better informed public could be a positive force in shaping conservation awareness, and thus policy and practice.” Regarding strategic growth, *Promises* states, “...working in partnership with others will increase the Service’s base of support and funding at the national level. The Service cannot lead in each and every case, and in many instances its best position should be in support of others.” Stated differently, *Promises* indicates leadership is required, but not always from the front. Thus leadership in general and in partnership with others is critical to success.

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## Essential Elements of Effective Leadership

**F**our essential elements of effective leadership are:

1. Make leadership development a priority
2. Create and institutionalize a leadership culture
3. Encourage diversity of thought
4. Become a learning organization.

## Defining Success -- What Are the Key Outcomes of Effective Leadership?

**S**ince the early 1990s, some have warned of an impending loss of institutional knowledge due to widespread retirement of senior federal managers. The Service's attrition rate through 2007 may approach 13 percent, although some have projected an average supervisor retirement eligibility rate of 16 percent in 2004-2006. Past actual retirements have been significantly below eligibility. For example, in 1999-2001, actual supervisory retirements were consistently six percent below eligibility.

Although the Refuge System has had lower-than-expected retirement rates, Refuge System managers identified retirements as their primary emerging workforce concern. If a wave of retirements hits, does the Refuge System have a large cadre of younger managers waiting to step in?

Intellectual capital – the knowledge in employees' heads as well as their competence and commitment – is an organization's only appreciable asset. Unlike buildings and equipment, which begin to depreciate upon acquisition, intellectual capital, properly managed and led, increases in value. Because the prime driver of today's economy is knowledge, the need to protect or transfer intellectual capital is paramount.

If the Refuge System cannot successfully transfer its critical intellectual capital to tomorrow's leaders, it will be eroded or lost entirely. The next generation of manager-leaders must be prepared, or the organization suffers. For instance, many Refuge System employees bemoan that few members of the Service Directorate have ever worked on a national wildlife refuge.

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Citing such changes as an expanded global economy, the increased speed of business, downsizing, leaps in technological innovation and employees' needs for creativity, leadership gurus preach that organizations must change with the times, or wither and die. Leadership is pivotal in recognizing the need for change (vision), creating change (adapting), and repositioning the organization for success by creating and increasing value for its customers. John Kotter, author of *Leading Change*, believes, "The twenty-first century employee will need to know more about both leadership and management than did his or her twentieth-century counterpart."

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A survey conducted by KRC Research asked Service employees and some partners what they thought the most management important tools were to reach various System goals. Given choices of “change policies,” “new legislative authority,” “redirecting existing funds,” “seek new funds,” “more effective partnerships” and “seek better public support,” respondents overwhelmingly selected the latter three. The Refuge System’s ability to implement these approaches relies on effective leadership.

Ultimately, leadership is about effectiveness. In today’s performance culture, public administrators are driven to deliver goods and services efficiently and effectively, as well as transparently. The Refuge System develops strategic plans under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), tracks employee working hours by Activity-Based Costing (ABC) codes and defines effectiveness by a Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART). Leaders deliver the results requires for the Refuge System to remain a viable, vital organization.

## Defining Success

Under each of the essential elements below are a number of potential ways to describe (and in some instances, measure) success. These are intended as a partial list of suggestions. Many pair with the recommendations found in Appendix I. Some readily fit under multiple elements, such as participation in leadership development programs, which contribute to continuous learning, creating a leadership culture, and making leadership development a Refuge System priority.

### *1. Make Leadership Development the System Priority*

*Promises’* Recommendation L1 is: “Make leadership development the priority of the System and the Service.” And *Promises* does not confuse leadership with job title: “Developing the full leadership potential of every employee should be a priority.” To be successful in this essential element, every leader, faced with a choice between mentoring a protégé or completing a managerial task would chose mentoring. Success would also manifest in other ways:

- Leadership development would appear as a separate element in the Service’s GPRA Strategic Plan. (Actions that are evaluated get done.)
- NCTC has a surplus of volunteers to coach in its two leadership development programs.
- NCTC’s leadership development programs are funded as a line item.
- At least one-third of the Regional Directorship is Refuge System employees.
- Cuts to leadership development program budgets are taken last, not first.
- The System becomes a vital, adaptable, more successful organization as a result of striving to achieve this goal.

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## *2. Create and Institutionalize a Leadership Culture*

Create a Leader-Centered Culture where developing future leaders is seen as a desirable and legitimate use of fiscal resources, and the best use of a leader's time.

*To be successful in the future, structures, processes and rules that unduly impair development of a leadership culture need to be changed or removed.*

- Positions with leadership functions, such as most managerial positions, are filled with candidates rated and selected with a balance between leadership capabilities and technical skills.
- All employees, but especially supervisors and managers with leadership functions, are evaluated each year based upon their leadership competencies. The supervisor, peers, selected partners, and subordinates conduct such evaluations (i.e., a 360°-degree assessment).
- Employees separating under non-adverse conditions are quickly and routinely surveyed, especially regarding their perceptions of the quality of supervision, management, and leadership, and management takes appropriate action upon these findings.
- The Service's leadership development programs are at least filled proportionally with Refuge System employees, regardless of whether these employees occupy supervisory or managerial positions.
- Supervisors and managers with leadership functions must attend selected training, such as supervision and coaching, to develop the appropriate leadership competencies and proficiently demonstrate these competencies on the job.
- Partners and stakeholders are involved in identifying leadership needs within the Refuge System.
- Effective leadership, wherever it occurs, is recognized, encouraged and rewarded.
- Structures, processes and rules that unduly impair development of a leadership culture are changed or removed.
- The Refuge System becomes a vital, adaptable, more successful organization as a result of striving to achieve this goal.

## *3. Encourage Diversity of Thought*

This element is titled more than "diversity" because it is intended to encompass representativeness as well as being open to different opinions and perspectives, and using both to strengthen the Refuge System.



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- The Service meets its representativeness diversity goals.
- Recognize diversity is more than just bean counting, but is essential to a vital organization.
- Our retention rates for employees do not vary by sex, ethnicity, race, profession, or any other variable.
- Partners, stakeholders, and the general public feel they are heard and understood, regardless of whether their input, recommendations, etc. is ultimately used.
- Begin recruiting before the audiences reach college age, to ensure an adequate pool of well-qualified candidates for Refuge System positions.
- The System becomes a vital, adaptable, more successful organization as a result of striving to achieve this goal.

#### ***4. Become a Learning Organization***

A learning organization has an enhanced capacity to learn, adapt, and change by embracing a culture of lifelong learning which enables all employees to continually acquire and share knowledge. *Promises* calls this “organizational vitality.”

- The Continuous Learning policy is fully implemented.
- Necessary training, development, and education is not viewed as taking employees away from “real work;” instead, these activities are viewed as part of every employee’s real work.
- Successful *attempts* at innovation and adaptation, wherever they occur, are recognized, encouraged, and rewarded.
- The Refuge System becomes a vital, adaptable, more successful organization as a result of striving to achieve this goal.

#### **Assessing Current Condition -- Where Are We Today?**

**T**en years ago, formal leadership development within the Service and Refuge System was lacking. Although there were pockets of excellence in employee and Leadership development around individual supervisors, leadership development clearly was not a priority.

Since then, the Refuge System has created an enhanced consciousness and dialogue about leadership development, and two very well received leadership development programs – Stepping Up To Leadership and the Advanced Leadership Development Program – were developed. The leadership recommendations in *Promises* led to formation of the Refuge System’s Leadership Development Council, which has begun

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to address such issues as diversity, recruitment, retention, and career pathways, and upward mobility, and developed the draft Leadership Development for the National Wildlife Refuge System national policy (230 FW 7).

Nonetheless, the Refuge System has a long way to go. The Refuge System is fortunate to have some truly exceptional individual leaders, and a highly dedicated workforce in general. There is, however, considerable room for improvement.

Leadership development clearly is not the priority of the System. For instance, the managers of the two Service leadership development programs report ongoing difficulty obtaining coaches for their respective programs. Refuge System employee participation in these two programs is not commensurate with the relative proportion of employees within the Service. Of the Service’s eight major geographic administrative areas, only two members of the Directorate have ever worked on a national wildlife refuge. If leadership development was the priority, if we indeed had a leadership culture and valued continuous learning, none of this should be true.

Diversity remains a difficult issue. It appears not only is enrollment in traditional wildlife schools dropping, but also minority enrollment is dropping at a higher rate. The Refuge System therefore needs to seek representative diversity among pre-college youth.

On a different level, the Refuge System does not always encourage diversity *of thought*. Leadership is about leveraging different perspectives to make the organization stronger. However, employees who leave continue to indicate their supervisors are not open to different perspectives or trying new ways of doing business.

In a relatively recent study, the Service found that, of the 10 close-ended survey questions, the lowest average score was in response to “My boss provided guidance and direction to help me succeed.” On this question, Hispanic men provided an average score of 1 on a 5-point Likert scale, and an average score of 2 in response to the question “I was treated fairly.” Black men also rated “I was treated fairly” at 2. In response to “My workplace was free from discrimination,” black women, Hispanic men, and Asian/Pacific Islander women all disagreed (i.e., average response was 2). Black men and Alaskan Native and Native American women were undecided (i.e., average response was 3). In both studies, the top two reasons that would have averted separation were, in order of significance, higher pay and advancement opportunities and *correction of harassment and discrimination*. As leaders with responsibility for “leveraging diversity” we have some room for improvement.

There are other indicators improvement is needed in the prioritization of leadership development. For instance, a review of the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) on current middle and senior management position vacancy announcement shows the Service continues to place strong emphasis on technical skills in the selection process. These individuals require sufficient technical expertise to make sound decisions, but should have stronger management skills and leadership competencies. This, known as

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stovepiping, continues to be quite common in organizations. As long as we continue to stovepipe only the very best biologists into manager-leader positions, we have only ourselves to blame if their managerial, supervisory, or leadership skills are lacking – because we did not select them for those skills.

**Measuring Progress  
-- How Do We Know  
if We Are Improving?**

In contrast to the standard by which many organizations measure the success of their leaders and leadership development programs – promotion to the next level – we have another, better option. The competency model described below under “Where Do We Start? – The Refuge System Manager of Tomorrow” provides a basic set of metrics to measure success. The leadership competencies, described in terms of behaviors, provide meaningful standards to evaluate leadership potential and the success of Service leadership development programs, such as Stepping Up To Leadership and the Advanced Leadership Development Program.

The leadership competencies will require some adjustment to the System, especially broadening Technical Credibility to encompass the technical proficiencies, such as law enforcement, identified as necessary for our manager-leaders. We can define success when all manager-leaders acquire at least basic proficiency in most of the leadership competencies. Due to their somewhat qualitative nature, many of the competencies may not be objectively quantifiable. However, some of the suggestions in Appendix I will begin to address the qualitative aspects of some leadership competencies. For instance, exit interviews of departing employees may provide valuable information on the efficacy of our manager-leaders that can be used to close competency gaps.

**Relationship to  
Overall Natural  
Resource  
Conservation**

In *Promises*, it says, “...leadership is the unequivocal prerequisite for mission accomplishment. Robust budgets, political support, public trust, and supportive legislation are necessary, but without visionary leadership they will not result in accomplishing the mission.” In the United States, the Refuge System is just a single piece of the conservation puzzle. The Refuge System’s success contributes to the greater whole. Our leadership can make a difference not only within the Refuge System, and Service, but nationally. For instance, our leadership in developing national habitat goals for land conservation will bring together all the Service programs, willing States, and many national and local conservation organizations. By combining efforts through effective leadership, the Refuge System can create efficiency through synergy that will accomplish more for wildlife conservation than could be accomplished independently.

**Where Do We Start?**

So what does the Refuge System Manager of the future look like? Must they be a godlike figure, omnipotent in their perfection and perfect possession and grasp of each of the 27 Leadership Competencies described below and in Appendix IV? No. Leadership perfection is not attainable. To be a successful leader, one must possess many of these competencies and, importantly, *actively striving to enhance those already possessed, and attain those not yet possessed*. The successful leader of tomorrow must, at a minimum, always pursue self-development and strive to master new knowledge and competencies.

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## The Refuge System Manager of Tomorrow

We use the term Refuge System Manager deliberately. The majority of Refuge System employees are in the GS-0485 Refuge Manager job series. Most, but not all of senior managers are drawn from that job series. (Perhaps this can be changed in the near future to truly focus on the “best and brightest,” regardless of job series.) Because Refuge Managers and their supervisors, up to and including Regional Chiefs, have both *leadership* and *management* responsibilities, they are the managers of the Refuge System, or Refuge System Managers.

To describe tomorrow’s Refuge System Manager, we must first describe what we need and want them to be able to do. We describe what they must be able to do as “competencies,” and the set of those competencies as a “competency model.” The Office of Personnel Management has published its Executive Core Qualifications, which, although intended to evaluate suitability for Senior Executive Service entrants, has been widely adopted throughout the Federal government as a standard competency model. The team proposes adoption of this competency model as the basis for evaluating Leadership in the Refuge System.

Will the Refuge System Manager of the future look significantly different from a leader in any other organization? The answer is a qualified “no.” Leadership is Leadership, and what makes a leader remains fairly consistent, differing only slightly in terms of technical expertise that often becomes less important as one rises in an organization. The need for specific technical expertise and associated technical credibility will vary according to organizational culture.

## Leadership Qualities

After 20 years of research and 75,000 surveys of executives, authors James Kouzes and Barry Posner found that only four of 225 values/personal traits/characteristics consistently garnered, more than 50 percent of the votes as those admired in a leader that individuals willingly followed:

- Honest (integrity)
- Forward-looking (vision)
- Competent
- Inspiring

Honesty is self-explanatory: followers want ethical, principled leaders. Forward-looking is also self-explanatory: it includes not only vision, but also the sense of direction and purpose that vision provides.

Competent, however, is somewhat more broad and complex. It is judged by others’ experience in the profession or operation, or a type of technical credibility. A leader need not be the most technically proficient, but they must understand the business well.

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Inspiring includes not only a vision that gives purpose and meaning, but the ability to communicate that purpose in such a way to draw others to the cause. It is a positive outlook, especially in the face of adversity, that brings energy and enthusiasm to any task.

### **Leadership Competencies**

**U**nder the five Executive Core Qualifications of Leading Change, Leading People, Results Driven, Business Acumen, and Building Coalitions/Communication, there are 27 underlying leadership competencies called Key Characteristics. For example, the Leading People ECQ contains four leadership competencies: Conflict Management, Leveraging Diversity, Integrity/Honesty, and Team Building. The Leading Change ECQ includes, among others, leadership competencies of Vision, Resilience, and Flexibility. Clearly, there are overlaps among the most desirable leadership *qualities* and *competencies* (i.e., Integrity/Honesty, Forward-looking and Vision, etc.). Because OPM so completely describes the ECQs and leadership competencies of our adopted competency model, it is not necessary to describe them in detail here, except for Technical Credibility.

### **Technical Skills and Credibility**

**T**he Results Driven ECQ contains a leadership competency called Technical Credibility:

*Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise. Is able to make sound hiring and capital resource decisions and to address training and development needs. Understands linkages between administrative competencies and mission needs.*

Duties on national wildlife refuges have always been diverse. Relatively low staffing levels and a great variety of management programs ensured refuge staff worked in many different programs. In the past, refuge managers were expected to master the technical aspects of each program to provide them the leadership competency of Technical Credibility and the leadership quality of Competent.

*Today's workplace is much more complicated and fast paced.*

Today's workplace is much more complicated and fast paced. Refuges battle an ever-widening array of invasives, conduct business by e-mail and satellite telephone, locate resources using Global Positioning Systems and visit the refuge virtually on a Geographic Information System. Society has become more litigious. "Administrivia" is pervasive, and a new generation of employees is far less willing to work long hours than earlier generations. There simply is not time for every refuge employee to master every refuge management program. In that light, how should the Refuge System establish the minimum technical proficiency, or credibility, for success as a Refuge System manager and a leader?

Many of the leadership competencies are also basic managerial skills identified in the old POSDCoRB acronym. The "S" in POSDCoRB, Staffing, relates directly to the leadership competency of Human Resources Management. Similarly, Budgeting loosely correlates to Financial Management. These are critical skills for manager-

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leaders. Still other technical competencies are in the key characteristics: oral and written communication are often cited by leadership gurus as essential skills for tomorrow's leaders. Competency in these areas is necessary for the Refuge System manager and leader.

In addition, there are certain programs that carry liability above and beyond that of the typical refuge management activity, including law enforcement and fire management. Not only do these activities carry an increased likelihood of loss of human life, but also additional liabilities. Ill-trained Refuge Officers can deprive a citizen of their constitutional rights. Ill-planned prescribed fires may torch neighboring lands and homes.

The Department, in its Strategic Human Capital Management Plan: FY 2003-2007, identified several critical skill shortages, including law enforcement and fire management, information technology, financial management, contract management, facilities management and engineering, strategic business planning, and mediation and negotiation.

*Competency in oral and written communication is necessary for the Refuge System manager and leader.*

The only identified skill gap not covered by an OPM key characteristic is natural and physical science. The Refuge System self-identified skill gaps in the areas of realty, water resources, program analysis, technology tools and applications, and visioning. Of these, the latter two are redundant with existing key characteristics. Finally, the Service said the following about new skills and areas (competencies) of focus for the future:

*Supervisors and managers will require more skills in managing people...Our supervisory cadre will need to have stronger team-development skills, stronger communication and negotiation skills, and be adept at participatory management. ... Continued emphasis on outreach and partnering will require increased interpersonal skills. Additionally, a renewed emphasis on visitor services on National Wildlife Refuges will be required, and all Service employees will be challenged to be involved in negotiating, facilitating, and communicating effectively.*

Collectively, the technical skills, or competencies, identified by these efforts that do not readily correlate to OPM key characteristics are law enforcement, fire management, natural and physical science, realty, and water resources. These, then, seem to be the most important technical skills for our Refuge System Manager of tomorrow.

The review of the classic functions of a manager, Kouzes and Posner's findings, the OPM key characteristics, and various workforce planning documents provide two important pieces of information. First, there is considerable alignment between these documents and the qualities and competencies they identify as critical to future leader success. Secondly, there are important technical skills necessary for tomorrow's Refuge System Managers to acquire Technical Credibility as leaders. So how do we get from here to there? Our journey will require changes to how we do business on a daily basis. Suggested tasks to achieve our vision are outlined in Appendix I.



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**Workforce Planning**

**T**he Refuge System has executed a contract to conduct job analyses and position management reviews, establish training and development profiles, and evaluate alternatives to delivering that training to meet the wide geographic dispersion of the Refuge System workforce. Using results from an analysis of the current and historical workforce projects in the Refuge System, the job analyses and position management reviews would commence for selected priority functional groupings requiring thoroughly updated job analyses, comprehensive position management reviews, and development of core staffing models.

The results will include an array of standard position descriptions and related evaluation statements that form a position management template to be applied across the entire Refuge System, competencies related to those positions, career ladders with dual career-tracks as appropriate, unit and organizational structure templates, quantitative data and justification for staffing level requirements in the form of staffing and deployment models, and a succession planning system.

Once the job analysis and position management review is completed and the Refuge System has an accurate view of current skill and competency requirements for those employees, training and development profiles will be developed. The training and development profiles will document the link between competencies and proficiency levels identified through the job analysis and position management reviews and the training, development, and experiential learning needed or required to achieve them.

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## Appendix I

### Recommendations

This appendix, divided into structural tasks, such as policy or reporting lines, and cultural changes, and separates tasks into those that have no or low cost and more costly ones. There is, of course, some overlap. The tasks are not in priority order.

#### Structural Tasks

##### *No/Low Cost*

1. Aggressively Implement Continuous Learning Policy. Organizational learning is dependent upon the learning of the individuals that comprise it, and the transference of that learning into the organizational culture. This is a critical first step towards moving toward a learning culture.
2. Add Leadership to Service Strategic Plan. The Service's Government and Performance and Results Act strategic plan does not contain specific accountability for leadership or its development, although effective leadership is the basis for success in every other area of performance.
3. Implement a 360- Degree Feedback Performance System. Objective feedback is essential for individual growth and the successful development of leadership competencies. The existing performance appraisal system is inadequate to provide specific feedback on particular leadership competencies. Widely used in the private sector, 360-Degree Feedback performance systems are also useful in succession planning through the early identification of future leaders. This system can be integrated with the existing Achieved/Not Achieved pass/fail-type performance evaluation system, or replace it.
4. Incorporate Emotional Intelligence Assessments to the Foundations Course. Emotional intelligence is a fairly accurate predictor of leadership potential and major contributor to organizational effectiveness. Because the Foundations Course is mandatory for all new Service employees, this task will aid in the early identification of future leaders in conjunction with a 360-Degree Feedback performance system.
5. Initiate Longitudinal Studies. Tracking employees' performance throughout their professional careers will help ascertain the effectiveness of early identification techniques (i.e., 360-Degree Feedback performance system, emotional intelligence assessment), training and formal course work related to leadership competencies, and actual leadership development training or activities. Findings must be adaptively incorporated into future leadership development activities.
6. Fully Embrace OPM ECQs As the Competency Model. Although the OPM ECQs have been used since 1997, they have not been widely used in the Refuge System except for the Department's SES Candidate Development Program. The key characteristic of technical credibility should be broadened to encompass specific technical proficiencies necessary for success as a manager, leader, or both in the Refuge System, and by individuals based on their particular job series and position description, as illuminated by the results of our workforce planning contract.
7. Require Formal Coaching Training For All Supervisors. Just as the Leadership Competencies of Leverag-



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supervisors must receive formal training in coaching. Fulfilling this requirement, as well as other mandatory training, must be tracked. When requirements are not met, meaningful action must be taken to correct noncompliance.

8. **Aggressively Implement IDP Policy.** Individual Development Plans are the tangible results of the regular discussions supervisors should have with their direct reports on personal growth, professional development, and career progression. Aggressive implementation is another important step to change the organizational culture and an opportunity for supervisors to model the behavior desired in tomorrow's leaders.
9. **Implement Formal Exit Interview Requirement.** Research clearly shows most employees leave an organization because of their supervisor. Exit interviews are an excellent source of feedback on the efficacy of supervisors. They will provide the Refuge System with another metric to measure success and a source of data for adaptive management of leadership development activities.
10. **Implement Written Policy on Mobility and National Experience.** Compounded by an array of societal changes, such as the increase of dual-career families, mobility, especially in pursuit of national experience, has become increasingly difficult. Nonetheless, it may be the only way to become familiar with the organization at multiple levels and in multiple operational areas. Mobility is not always geographic: its benefits are more tied to being placed outside one's comfort zone, whether in a new position, new program or new state. The U.S. military has carefully designed mobility and training programs to produce topflight leaders; the Refuge System can do the same.

#### *Cost*

1. **Workforce Planning.** The Refuge System has executed a contract to conduct job analyses and position management reviews, establish training and development profiles, and evaluate alternatives to delivering training to meet the wide geographic dispersion of its workforce. A key outcome from these activities will be competency models for the future Refuge System workforce and position structures to support them. These models and structures will not dictate staffing levels but will be used to make informed and deliberate decisions about strategic deployment of the workforce needed to meet mission requirements.

#### **Cultural Tasks**

##### *No/Low Cost*

1. **Leaders Must Take Responsibility for Developing Leaders.** Leadership training is not a task that can be relegated to NCTC. True leaders must leave the staff work to the staff and concentrate on transferring their intellectual capital to the next generation. This can be accomplished through coaching, mentoring, teachable moments, or in any number of other ways, either informally or through formal leadership development programs or activities.
2. **Quit Stovepiping.** Like many organizations, the Refuge System tends to promote the most technically competent individuals into supervision and management, regardless of the individual's suitability (i.e., competency) to supervise, manage, or lead. We must use competency model-based evaluations to promote the best leaders, not the best technical experts, and create non-supervisory career paths for advancement.

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3. Cut Leadership Training and Development Budgets Last. Training programs are usually the first to be cut when budgets are tight. If leadership leads to successes, then these programs must be the last to be cut. A cut in leadership development impacts every program.

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## Appendix II

### Leadership Recommendations from *Fulfilling the Promise*

**Recommendation L1:** *Make leadership development the priority of the System and the Service.*

**Recommendation L2:** *Establish a systematic recruitment, training, and mentoring program to hire the best and brightest, while creating a diverse workforce.*

**Recommendation L3:** *Enhance retention and formalize recommended career pathways to develop leaders at all levels of the System.*

**Recommendation L4:** *Promote opportunities and an environment for career-long education and personal development for all employees.*

**Recommendation L5:** *Ensure that the System produces a cadre of leaders qualified and willing to successfully compete for senior leadership positions in the Service.*

**Recommendation L6:** *Reflect the importance of appropriate field experience when developing ranking factors and crediting plans for senior resource program manager positions.*

**Recommendation L7:** *Amend the “National Wildlife Refuge System Administrative Provisions” in the Code of Federal Regulations to make the Blue Goose a permanent design element on refuge boundary signs and refuge primary entrance signs. Direct the Service committees for signing and graphic standards to incorporate the Blue Goose in current and future guidelines.*

**Recommendation L8:** *Articulate and distribute core values of the System.*

**Recommendation L9:** *Establish a Service policy to address housing needs on refuges for entry-level employees.*

**Recommendation L10:** *Develop and maintain consistent organizational structures across regions, providing a consistent set of basic regional office functions for refuge support.*

**Recommendation L11:** *Fully implement and integrate the provisions of the Refuge Improvement Act into operations and activities of the System.*

**Recommendation L12:** *Provide consistent refuge management guidance, including Refuge Improvement Act implementation policy, in a new Refuge Manual.*

**Recommendation WH11:** *Ensure an interdisciplinary staff of specialists and increased use of advanced technologies at the refuge, ecosystem, regional and national levels (as appropriate) to provide habitat management and monitoring expertise for the System.*

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**Recommendation WH12:** Address inadequate and inconsistent staffing and allocation of resources for biological programs by increasing biological staffing at all levels of the System (having each staffed refuge served by a field biologist), and funding base biological programs at each refuge as appropriations allow.

**Recommendation WH13:** Develop a program to address career and professional needs of biological program staff by providing career ladders and by implementing a comprehensive training program.

**Recommendation P3:** Provide each refuge with access to responsive, professional, public use management staff. The level of assistance needed at each refuge is identified in Comprehensive Conservation Plans, operational evaluations, and inter-regional reviews. Refuges, regional offices, and the Division in Washington will have public use staffs with the skills and abilities needed to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of the public and fulfill the System mission.

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## Appendix III

### Refuge System Guiding Principles

*As land stewards with a sacred trust, we uphold the land ethic of Aldo Leopold, and seek to instill it in our communities.*

*Wild lands and the perpetuation of diverse and abundant wildlife are essential to the quality of the American life.*

*We are public servants. We owe our employers, the American people, hard work, integrity, fairness, and a voice in the protection of their trust resources.*

*Management, ranging from preservation to active manipulation of habitats and populations, is necessary to achieve System and Service missions.*

*Wildlife-dependent uses involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation, when compatible, are legitimate and appropriate uses of the System.*

*Partnerships with those who want to help us meet our mission are welcome and indeed essential.*

*Employees are our most valuable resource. They are respected and deserve an empowering, mentoring, and caring work environment.*

*We respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of our neighbors.*

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## Appendix IV

### Office of Personnel Management 1997 Executive Core Qualifications and Underlying Key Characteristics

- *Executive Core Qualification*
  - *Key characteristic and example*
- Leading Change
  - Continual Learning – Attends advanced leadership training not to prepare to leave the field station, but to be more effective in current position and to set a good example for staff.
  - Creativity and Innovation – Understood the application of and implemented GIS to land use planning and management years before peers.
  - External Awareness – Follows proposed changes to State law and proactively anticipates the impacts on the refuge hunting program.
  - Flexibility – Constructively changes reporting regimes at the refuge to meet new Administration's reporting requirements.
  - Resilience – Able to come back to work smiling even after the refuge office was blown down by a tornado, and turn it into an opportunity.
  - Service Motivation – Manages refuge with the understanding that the primary client is the American people, not ducks.
  - Strategic Thinking – Uses the CCP process to resolve issues and orient refuge programs today to meet the long-term needs of an ecosystem.
  - Vision – Sees the military base just transferred as our newest national wildlife refuge, not as it is today, with fields of unexploded ordinance, but rather as the haven for wildlife and birdwatchers it could be.
- Leading People
  - Conflict Management – Addresses potential sexual harassment grievances in the workplace by taking action the first time an inappropriate comment is made, rather than waiting for a formal grievance.
  - Leveraging Diversity – Allows each staff member to work to their full potential, regardless of their job title, and respects, encourages, and values their contributions.
  - Integrity/Honesty – Follows through on promise to promote the biologist to the next grade once all requirements and mutually-set performance expectations are met.

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- Team Building – Uses the CCP process to improve communication, understanding, and *esprit de corps* between refuge staff members.
  - Results Driven
    - Accountability – Completes the Challenge Cost Share project with the State fish and wildlife agency on budget, without waste or undue delay.
    - Customer Service – Develops wildlife-dependent recreation programs, in part, upon the needs of the local community and visitor satisfaction feedback.
    - Decisiveness – Makes compatibility determinations on off-road vehicle use in a timely manner, even if sufficient biological data is not available.
    - Entrepreneurship – Works with local volunteers to create a new refuge support (Friends) group.
    - Problem Solving – Develops policy to address mosquito management concerns on national wildlife refuges.
    - Technical Credibility – Has sufficient competency in natural resource law enforcement to develop and supervise an effective refuge law enforcement program that protects the public and natural resources and is safe for the officers.
  - Business Acumen
    - Financial Management – Manages all aspects of the refuge budget in compliance with requirements. Knows the Federal budget cycle and agency budget formulation sufficiently to successfully justify station budget increases.
    - Human Resources – Hires the best and brightest/most qualified candidate to be the assistant refuge manager.
    - Technology Management – Uses GIS analysis to improve decisionmaking on the refuge habitat management program.
  - Building Coalitions/Communication
    - Influencing/Negotiations – Develops a mutually beneficial solution with the county government to control invasive species on the lands adjacent to the refuge.
    - Interpersonal Skills – At public meetings, listens respectfully to and considers the opinions and input of everyone, no matter how ridiculous some of the input may sound.
    - Oral Communication – Consistently delivers critical recurring messages about the Refuge System and refuge in media interviews.

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- Partnering – When considering changes to the refuge hunt program, contacts the State biologist to discuss the matter.
  - Political Savvy – Realizes applying cuts to refuge recreation programs may be the best short-term solution, but, in the long-term, will affect the support base for the refuge, Refuge System, and wildlife conservation in general.
  - Written Communication – Able to write comprehensive, articulate, and compelling issue papers.